

ÆSOP'S FABLES.



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FABLE I.

A FOX and a sick LION.



A LION falling sick, all the beasts went to see him except the Fox, upon which the Lion sent for him, telling him he wanted to see him, and his presence would be very acceptable. Moreover he desired the messenger to assure the Fox that for several reasons he had no occasion to be afraid of him, since the Lion loved the Fox very well, and therefore desired to see him; besides he lay so sick, he could not stir to do the Fox any harm. The Fox returned an obliging answer, desiring the messenger to acquaint the Lion, he was very desirous of his recovery, and he would pray to the Gods for it; but desired to be excused for his not coming to see him as the other beasts had done; for truly, says he, the traces

their feet frighten me, all of them going towards the palace, but none coming back.

The Moral.

Words are not to be trusted, though never so fair.—
We must examine mens actions as well as their words, and judge of the one by the other, if we would escape their mischievous inventions.

The Remark.

The proverb holds true, Old Larks are not to be caught with chaff. The Lion by his pretended sickness, gussed the Fox in point of civility ought to pay him a visit, and sending such a kind invitation, so full of compliments, was still a greater obligation on the Fox to pay his respects to him; but he was too sharp-sighted not to see through his design: though truly it is sometimes hard to distinguish between a friendly invitation and an hypocritical snare; so that a man is often at a loss, not knowing but he may disoblige a friend, while he thinks only to save himself from the hands of the enemy.—However, while this world is so full of tricks, it is always the best and wisest method to take particular care where any signs of suspicion appear.

FABLE II.

The STAG and the VINE.

A STAG, who was hard pursued, ran into a Vineyard, and took shelter under a Vine; when he thought his enemies were gone, and the danger over, he fell to browsing on the leaves, the rustling of the boughs gave a suspicion to the huntsmen, and on search he was discovered and shot, and as he was dying he said, How justly am I punished for offering to destroy my shade.

The Moral.

It is but just, that such who wrong their benefactors should be punished with divine vengeance.

The Remark.

There is nothing more abominable in the sight of God and Man than ingratitude; and such as repay good with evil, in seeking their protector's ruin, seldom escape God's judgment. This fable much exposes this, we may justly say, the worst of vices, as many of Esop's fables do; but yet all that God commands, men preach, or beasts practice against so enormous a sin, will not put a stop to the wicked doings of malicious spirits; and a man that can be guilty of ingratitude, is surely capable of any manner of wickedness.

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FABLE III.

The CRANE and GEESE.



AS some Geese and Cranes were feeding in a countryman's corn field, he heard their noise, and came presently out upon them. The Cranes seeing the man fled for it, but the Geese staid and were caught.

The Moral.

This fable signifies, that in taking of towns the poor easily escape, whilst the rich, tarrying at home to save their effects commonly lose their lives and fortunes.

The Remark

It is strange how riches alter the minds of men, how timorous they make the brave, and securing others, who trusting to their money, think to escape by that means, and thereby become the greater enemy. — This fable severely reflects on those who neglect their own preservation; for had the Geese been so wise as to go off with the Cranes, they might have saved themselves; but the sweetness of the corn they were feeding on, and the great weight of their bodies stoppea them till they were catcha.

FABLE IV.

A TRUMPETER taken Prisoner.



WHEN an army had been routed a trumpeter was taken prisoner, and as the soldiers were going to kill him, Gentlemen, says he, why should you kill a man that hurts nobody? You shall die the rather for that, says one of the company, when like a rascal you don't fight your self, you set other people by the ears.

The Moral.

He that provokes to do mischief is more guilty than those who do it.

The Remark.

This fable reproves such as delight in setting people by the ears, contrary to the Christian duty of being peacemakers, says our Saviour, for they shall be called the

children of God. For God is the God of peace and love.—
 Malice, hatred, and envy, which make such difference
 between the people, proceed from Satan; but meekness,
 goodness, and brotherly Kindness proceed from Christ the
 Prince of Peace. We may easily judge from the prac-
 tices of people, whose children they are; for whoever takes
 pleasure in division, strife, and discord, must be of their
 father the father the Devil, whose works they do, let
 their pretensions be ever so fair.

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FABLE V.

The HUSBANDMAN and STORK.

A Poor innocent Stork happened to be taken in a net that was laid for geese and cranes. The Stork's plea was simplicity and the love of mankind, to atone with the service she did in picking up venomous creatures -- It is all true, says the husbandman, but they that keep ill-company, if they are caught with them, must suffer with them.

The Moral.

A man is esteemed according to the company he keeps for it is an old saying, Birds of a feather all flock together.

The Remark.

There are many inconveniences attend the keeping of bad company. — A lewd and wicked example will be apt to have influence upon the person that frequents vi-

cious company; and if he should escape the plague, which is very rare, yet his credit and reputation suffers; so when the good and bad are taken together, for it is a common proverb, *Shew me the company, I will shew you the man.* It is the bad fortune of many a good man to fall into base company and be undone by it, and yet not guilty of iniquity of his companions; but was a man ever so innocent, it is a shame and dishonour to be taken up with rogues; what the Apostle says is true, *That Evil Communications corrupt Good Manners.*

FABLE VI.

The WASP and the PARTRIDGES.

A Flight of Wasps and a covey of Partridges being hard put to it for water, went to a farmer to beg some. The Partridges offered to dig his vineyard for it, and the Wasps to secure it from thieves. Pray hold your peace, says the farmer, I have oxen and dogs to perform those offices already, and I am resolved to provide for them first.

The Moral.

Charity begins at home, and it is very true what the apostle saith, He that does not provide for his own house is worse than an infidel.

The Remark.

People ought to consider well how they bestow their charity, for a poor person is not to rob his family; neither should a rich man refuse his charity to the necessitous. The apostle says, He who seeth his brother in want, and shuts up his bowels against him, how can the love of God be in him. A man's prudence will always direct him how to behave himself in such a case. —Only let a man be sincere in what he does.

F A B L E VII.

A DAW and PIGEONS.

A Daw took particular notice that the Pigeons in the dove-house were well provided for, so went and painted himself of a dove colour, and fed among the Pigeons: So long as he kept silence it pass'd very well, but forgetting himself he fell a chattering.—On which discovery they beat him out of the house; and on his return to his old companions, they also rejected him.

The Moral.

Him who halts between two opinions loses himself; for when he is discover'd to be true to neither, he is despised by both parties.

*The Remark.*

Some by grasping at too much lose all, and men do but make themselves ridiculous in imitating what they can-

not do.—For though the Daw painted herself like a Pigeon, yet it did not make her one; and though a man put himself in another's shope, yet he is soon discovered. The hypocrite is never so far from being a good Christian as when he looks like it; and double dealers are always discovered by some accident or other, and then both parties are cast them off; so that every man ought to be true to what he professes.

FABLE VIII.

The FOX and SNAKE.



A Fox and Snake meeting, sh^e began to entertain the Fox with a long story concerning the beauties and colours of her skin. The Fox, weary of the discourse, interrupted her, and said, The beauties of the mind were better than those of a painted outside.

The Moral.

A good understanding is a blessing far exceeding all outward beauty

The Remark.

Many are ready to prefer Beauty, Riches, and Honour, before wisdom, temperance, and piety; which inward blessings only distinguish men from beasts. We have few outward advantages beyond them, and in some are their inferiours; so that if it were not for the inward beauties, a man would be rather a prey to, than a Lord over them. Man will satisfy his sensual appetites, the brute beasts can do no more!

F A B L E IX.

The COUGH and SWALLOW.

THE Cough and the Swallow fell into a warm dispute about beauty, and the Swallow insisted mightily on her's, and claimed the advantage. Nay, says the Cough, you forget that your beauty decays with the spring, whereas mine lasts all the year.

The Moral.

Of two things equally good, that is the best which lasts the longest.

The Remark.

The greatest blessings that we can enjoy are health and long life. But the very strongest must expect to fall sick at last; and the longest life must have an end; so that these, with riches and honour, delights and pleasure, are like the Swallow's beauty, that lasteth but for a time; but goodness and piety afford pleasure here, and



everlasting joy hereafter; and they are fools, who like the Swallow value themselves on the beauties of this life and neglect to secure to themselves those pleasures which are at God's right-hand for evermore.

FABLE X.

A FATHER and his SONS.



*A*N honest man, who had the misfortune to have contentious children, endeavoured to reconcile them; and one day having them before him, he bought a bundle of sticks, then desired each of them to break it, which they strove to do, but could not. Well, said he, unbind it, and take every one a single stick, and try what you can do that way. They did so, and with ease they snapped all the stick. The father said to them, Children, your condition is exactly like unto that bundle of sticks; for if you hold together you are safe, but if you divide you are undone.

The Moral.

Small things increase by peace and unity, whereas great things dwindle and decay to nothing by discord.

The Remark.

Divisions have been the ruin of great kingdoms as well as private families, and all know how things go to ruin where one strives against another ; and strange it is men cannot do with all their reason and knowledge, what the brute beasts do ; for we find that even the fiercest of them, such as Tygers, Bears, and Wolves agree among themselves ; for our Saviour says, If Satan be divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand ? There is not one precept so often enjoined by our Saviour as unity ; for he mak's it as the distinct mark of his servants : By this shall all men know, says he, that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.

FABLE XI.

The FOX that had lost his TAIL.



A FOX having lost his Tail in getting out of a trap, when for so me he judged it death to live, devised to persuade other Foxes to cut off theirs, under a pretence of common benefit. The Foxes being convened, he told them their tails were both a disgrace and a burden. One of them who hated him, smartly replied, O brother where is your justice to advise us to do a thing which will be to nobody's advantage but your own.

The Moral.

This fable belongs to them, who under a shew of kindness aim only at their own profit.

The Remark.

The most part of mankind are so vile, that they cannot bear to be miserable by themselves, but must have company. And to succeed the better in their design, they never fail to use fair words to render seemingly wholesome council without being asked, and never give over till they have brought others into the same snare with themselves. In this they imitate the devil, who finding himself miserable, was never at rest until he had persuaded our first parents to ruin themselves. What smooth language did he use! how specious arguments to entice two innocent creatures to partake of his guilt. If this sad truth was well imprinted on our memory, it would prove to us as a beacon does to seamen, and shew us how to escape the dangers and hidden rocks of flattery and pretended charity, on which so many unfortunate people ship-wreck.

F A B L E XII.

The FOX and HUNTSMEN.

A FOX that had been run hard begged of a countryman, whom he saw hard at work in a wood, to help him to a hiding place. The man directed him to cottage, and thither he went. He was no sooner got in, but the Huntsmen were at his heels, and asked the cottager, If he did not see the Fox that way? No, said he, I saw none; but pointed with his finger to the place. Though the Huntsmen did not understand, yet the Fox saw him; and after they were gone, out steals the Fox: How now, said the countryman, have you not the manners to take leave of your host? Yes, said the Fox, if you had been as honest with your fingers as with your tongue, I should not have gone without bidding you farewell.

The Moral.

A man may discover things by signs as well as by words; and his conscience is as answerable for his finger as his tongue.

The Remark.

There is no trusting to those that do one thing and say another. There are too many instances of this kind. And let people pretend to what religion they will, gold and money are now the only God they adore. So what our Saviour foretold may be applied to these times, That a man's enemies shall be those of his own house. So also that of St Paul, In the latter days perilous times shall come; for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, unthankful, truth-breakers, without natural affection, traitors, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.

F A B L E XIII.

The FOX and BRAMBLE.

A FOX being closely pursued, took to a hedge, the bushes gave way and in catching hold of a Bramble to break his fall, he laid himself down and fell to licking his paws, making great complaints against the Bramble. Good words Reynard, said the Bramble, you should never expect any kindness from an enemy.

The Moral.

There are some malicious natures that place all their delight in ill turns; and the man is hard put to it, who being in distress is obliged to fly to such people for relief.

The Remark.

It is a great folly to fly for protection to people who naturally delight in mischief. The Fox blames the Bramble here, but he may thank himself: for how could he expect any goodness or kindness where there is none? It is a fatal thing for men, when God is offended with them to go to the devil for relief. This is what destroyed Saul, and what daily proves the destruction of many. Men commonly when pursued by an evil conscience, and roused by the guilt of their sins, run to a tavern, and drown their senses in a debauch; or else to a whoring or gaming, with a design to stifle these thoughts; though all these shifts afford no better comfort than the Bramble did the Fox; rather adding to, than diminishing his stings.

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